

## Former Air Force Officer seeks to serve country again ? as MP



**By Brock Weir**

As members of the Liberal Party of Canada descended on Markham this past weekend to share ideas and get ready for the next Federal election, area Liberals in the newly-created riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill had the opportunity to do the same here at home last week.

Having worked her way from Richmond Hill, and then to Oak Ridges, Liberal hopeful Leona Alleslev held her third ?meet and greet? event in Aurora on Wednesday night. Joined by family, friends, supporters, and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard, the event allowed area party faithful to exchange views with Ms. Alleslev, who is one of two candidates currently vying for the Liberal nod in the riding.

?There is huge excitement, there is an energy, an enthusiasm, and hope that we can make a difference going forward ? and we will make a difference going forward,? Ms. Alleslev told *The Auroran*.

Although this is her first true foray into the political arena, it far from the first time she has stepped into the realm of public service. With a father who grew up in Denmark during the German occupation in Second World War, with his own father serving in the Danish underground, Ms. Alleslev says she grew up in a family believing strongly that ?there are some things worth fighting for.? These forebears came to Canada with a vision of the future they wanted to see for their children and did their best to make it a reality. Once in Canada, her father joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. Leona eventually followed suit.

?As a military officer, I served the country,? she says. ?I have also lived and worked in other countries, so I have a very good feel for what I value about the country. As with most people when they want to get into politics, there is a tipping point around the direction and the vision of the country at that point in time, and I have been very concerned about the direction this country has gone in the last 10 years. I would very much like the opportunity to serve my country again and address some of those issues.?

Youth employment and the Canadian economy are two issues that particularly galvanized Ms. Alleslev to serve her country in a very different direction. Canada, she says, is losing full-time jobs at a significant rate and these jobs are largely being replaced by part-time and contract positions.

?I think that is jeopardizing the long-term viability of our economy as well as making it very difficult for the next generation who are graduating from university to have meaningful careers and to get started with that next phase in their life,? she says. ?There just aren't those jobs for them coming out of university. Further to that, we have a very high education cost for young people and that is resulting in them coming out of university with a lot of debt, which is also making it difficult for them to then contribute to the

economy.?

Transportation and infrastructure are two further issues of which she has concerns. Canada has slipped over the last 30 years in its ability to move people and goods, and that too is ?crippling? the country's ability to attract investment and to encourage growth in existing companies.

While she has had these concerns for quite some time, her service in the military did not allow her to be a member of any particular party. Since leaving the military to raise her family, she says she has had the opportunity to become more focused on politics, leaning ?very significantly? not just to the Liberal Party of Canada, but also Justin Trudeau's ?new vision? for the party.

?I think he is exactly what we need, the party is exactly what we need, and I am looking forward to the opportunity to be a part of that,? she says. ?It is the right time [for me to enter politics] because I have had the opportunity to do a number of things over my career. Being a logistics officer in the air force, working in the Federal government as a consultant as well as a public servant, also then working at IBM as a senior management consultant, I have had my own business, my kids are older, and looking to be relatively more self-sufficient. Also being an aircraft manager at Bombardier Aerospace, I felt now I had a breadth and depth of experience to be able to bring to such a responsible job of leading the direction of the country. Now is the right time and I am looking forward to taking it on.?

Ms. Alleslev has been a resident of Oak Ridges since 2005 with her husband Ted and children Christopher and Hillary.

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill is yet to receive word on when their nomination meeting will be. Also in the race for the Liberal nomination is lawyer Jason Cherniak. Newmarket-Aurora acclaimed Kyle Peterson as their candidate last Monday.

The next Federal election is expected in October 2015.